

Marketing Your Website: Domain Names 101

By Aaron Turpen

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by Aaron Turpen of Aaronz WebWorkz

Any new website venture online will include a domain name. Sometimes the domain is purchased from a domain broker - someone who specializes in reselling domain names. The majority of the time, however, it will be registered through a domain registrar. No matter how it is purchased, in all cases, the domain name (or names) for a website should be carefully considered. The basis of the marketing for the website will be the domain name chosen.

Having been a domain name appraiser for a few years now, I can tell you that the choice of names for your site is critical to marketing. When I appraise a domain for value (in both dollars and marketability), I use basic criteria for my judgement of the domain. The most important of those criteria is length and readability. If the domain is too long or too hard to read (for a human), its value is very low. If it cannot be spoken and typed correctly (most of the time), it's also of low value. A well-thought-out domain name is the first step in a successful marketing campaign.

When choosing and registering a domain name for a new website, there are three basic steps to follow to ensure a marketable name for your site. Follow them every time and you'll have successful domains every time.

Step 1: The Name

Choosing a name may be as easy as "your business name dot com" or it may be more difficult (especially if you have a common name for your business). In all cases, your business' name should be your number one pick for your domain name. If your business name is difficult to spell easily, try to register misspellings of it as well.

For instance, my business name is "Aaronz WebWorkz," so I obviously own "AaronzWebWorkz.com." Since this is regularly misspelled by potential clients, I also have "AaronsWebWorks.com" registered so that all email and web requests go to the original AaronzWebWorkz.com site. In addition to this, I purchased "dotcom-it.com" as an alternate domain and use that when giving out the URL on the phone or in situations where I can't hand someone a

business card with my URL printed on it.

If your business name, as an example, is "Widgets, Inc.," however, you'll have a hard time getting the domain name "widgets.com" or "widgetsinc.com" and will have to find alternatives. I have a simple process I use and recommend when this is the case. Even if your product or product type isn't in your business' name, it's a good idea to purchase domains with that product in the name to use for marketing purposes.

First, make a list of words or short phrases that have something to do with your business. Six to ten of these is good to start off. Once you have the list, remove all of the ones that have more than twenty characters in them (this keeps them short). Then create new additions to your list by replacing empty spaces with "-" and "_" characters. Finally, compress the spaced words into one word (e.g. "widgets galore" becomes "widgetsgalore") to add to the list.

Now that you have this list, prioritize it by numbering the entries from 1 to 10 (or so). Now see if these domains are available (step 2).

Step 2 - Domain Availability

This step is easy and will take just a few minutes to do. Take your list from Step 1 and begin with #1 on that list. Go to any domain registrar (see list below) and enter the domains in the order they are numbered on your list. Usually, you can just enter the domain without a suffix (.com, .net, etc.) and find out if any of the variations are available. Most registrars will also produce a list of alternatives you may want to consider as well.

As you proceed through the list, check off any domains that ".com" is available for. Don't worry about most alternatives since, for business, dot com is where it's at. Cross out any names on your list that aren't available. Once you're finished, you should have a short list of available, good domains for your business.

Step 3 - Register the Domain

Now that you know what's available, begin registering those domains! Domain registrars are all over the Web with varying prices and services. A good registrar is worth any extra money that may be spent since a registrar going out of business could easily cause headaches and nightmares for you. I have used, worked with, and recommend the following registrars:

DirectNIC: <http://www.directnic.com?3908>

Domain-Maniac: <http://www.qksrv.net/click-1357406-4050466>

Dotster: <http://www.qksrv.net/click-1357406-1099456>

In addition, you may wish to use the domain tools offered at easyDNS. Especially if you register a lot of domains are in need of "extras" that aren't normally offered by a registrar. EasyDNS: <http://www.qksrv.net/click-1357406-5590844>

Good luck with your new venture!

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Aaron Turpen is the proprietor of Aaronz WebWorkz, which offers many services to small businesses online including an informative weekly newsletter (advertisement free!) to subscribers. This and more are available at the website: <http://www.AaronzWebWorkz.com>

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